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How do I Evaluate Community Coalitions for the Prevention of Substance Abuse?

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The evaluation of a community coalition working in substance abuse prevention is a process involving assessment, capacity building, planning, implementation and reassessment. The reassessment phase can be considered an evaluation phase. Prevention of substance abuse by community coalitions requires a feedback loop to manage the community resources. The goal of community coalitions is to reduce the rate of substance abuse over a period of time. Prevention activities by coalitions are evaluated through analysis of outcomes, both internally and by an independent external evaluator. Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America trains community leaders on building drug-free communities.

Difficulty: Moderately Challenging

Instructions

Things You'll Need

- Logic model
- Data measurements
- Needs assessment
- Strategic plan

- 1** Take a needs assessment with current input from the community regarding perceived danger of substance abuse. The initial screening from community members by the coalition provides key prevention priorities, such as alcohol, marijuana, or pain medication. Quantitative data includes surveys and attendance records. Qualitative data includes interviews and focus groups. Both data sources should be included in the assessment process.
- 2** Collect any evaluation information available from prior assessments.

Compare data from previous research in the community and analyze changing patterns across demographics. School surveys and arrest records provide a baseline for documenting change. Document research findings specific to the coalition. Disseminate data at the national, state, community, relationship and individual levels.

- 3 Establish a plan to reassess after capacity-building and implementation activities. Consider the strength of the coalition's partnerships. Ask questions, such as: "Are there representatives from each of these sectors included: faith, government, business, health care, law and justice, media, philanthropy, and youth development?" Make recommendations for the inclusion of missing sectors to build the capacity of the coalition. Strategies to address the coalition's key priorities require indicators, such as an increased perception of danger of substance abuse by community members.
- 4 Build evidence that existing strategies and indicators are connected. Strategic planning by coalitions helps build capacity in the community to effect change. Report on social networking and media campaign activities. Gather information from missing demographics, such as age or ethnic background. Address input about any socioeconomic factors regarding substance abuse prevention within the community coalition. Identify barriers to data collection. Produce record of the effect of social norm campaigns, such as billboards with prevention messages, radio announcements or news shows devoted to prevention activities.
- 5 Prepare an evaluation report containing outcomes, indicators, data sources and collection timeline. Project outcomes for short-term, intermediate, and long-term evaluation. Each outcome focuses in detail on a specific indicator, data source and collection term, such as weekly and annually.
- 6 Make recommendations about the evaluation process to the coalition.

Tips & Warnings

- Maintain data integrity without compromising professional confidentiality.
- The evaluation process must have clear deadlines and evolve with the changing needs of the community. Keep evaluation recommendations linked to best practices and evidence-based tools from the national level.

Resources

- [CADCA: Evalulation Plan](#)